

Joliet Arsenal Major Center For Fertilizer Production

One of the "stand-by" plants in the United States preparedness program, the Joliet arsenal continues to serve an important function as a fertilizer production center and a storage unit.

According to Lt. Col. Raymond C. Costabile, commanding officer of the arsenal, it will continue to have a busy and important year in 1949, and will continue to employ approximately 1,000 employees, including those assigned to the office of field director of ammunition plants. The OFDAP is the focal point in Joliet for operation of all plants in this country similar to Joliet arsenal.

THE ARSENAL is a consolidation and redesignation of the Kankakee Ordnance Works and the Elwood Ordnance Plant. The plants were one of the nation's largest combined producers of munitions during the war.

Last year the arsenal embarked on an extensive program of demilitarization, including the storage of many important weapons used during World War II. Instead of scraping these armaments, they have been specially treated, "wrapped" and placed in storage so that the U. S. will not be caught unprepared again in case of international emergency.

The arsenal thru its production of ammonium nitrate for fertilizer, which increases productivity of soil, played an important part in 1948 in helping to rehabilitate war-torn countries. This fertilizer program will continue in 1949.

Peak employment during the war was reached on the Kankakee unit in February, 1945, with

approximately 5,000 persons, and at Elwood Ordnance plant in September, 1942, with about 14,000 persons.

Ammunition plants in the U. S. are operated under the control of the field director of ammunition plants. On Dec. 3, 1945, the OFDAP was moved from St. Louis, to Joliet arsenal. Geographically the local plant is strategically located with shipping facilities abundantly available. The arsenal is served by several railroads, United States highways and barge lines out of Joliet.

ON THE RESERVATION there are about 75 sets of living quarters in use, which does much to relieve the still acute housing situation in the Joliet area. These houses are assigned to officer and civilian personnel of the arsenal. In addition any farm houses that were acquired with the land were reconditioned and still are in use.

Many of the buildings constructed for use during the war are no longer required for stand-by purposes. These have been declared excess and are being sold at regular sales on a competitive bid basis. Other groups of buildings are being leased to commercial concerns, which returns money to the coffers of Uncle Sam.

An area of 36,092.24 acres or approximately 65 square miles is covered by the arsenal, with some of the richest farm land in Illinois. In order that this land may be utilized to furnish food for use here and abroad, about 27,000 acres have been leased to farmers.